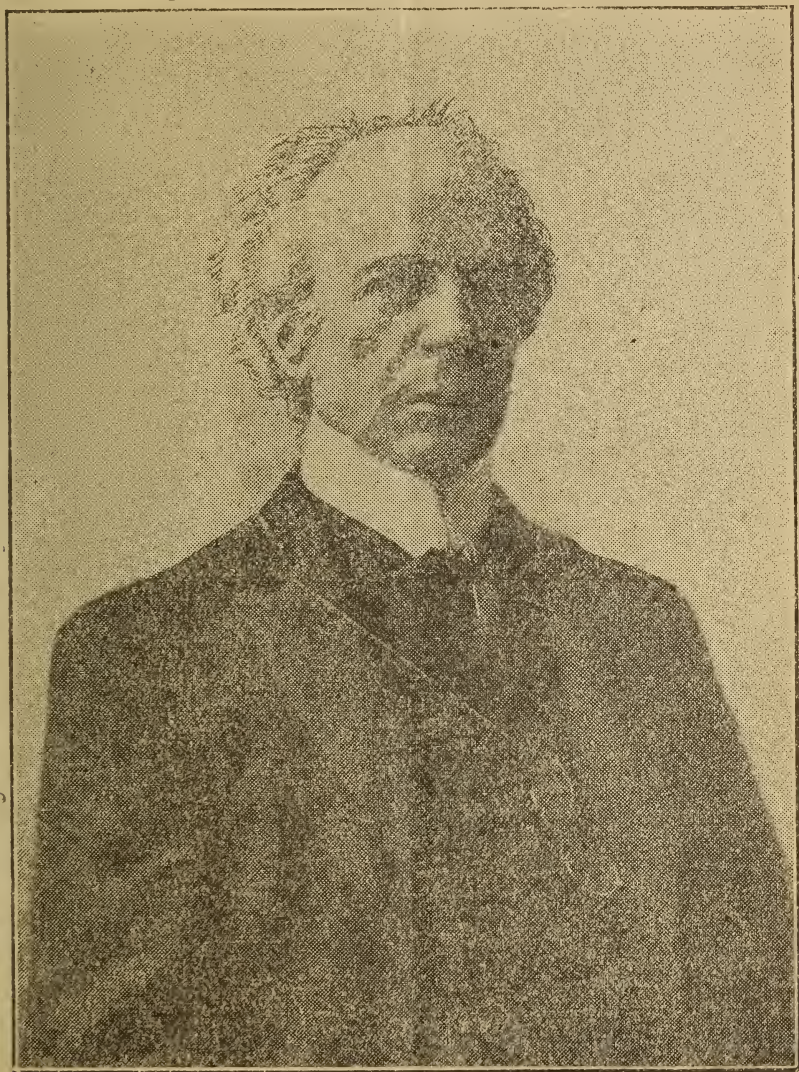


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RECIPROCAL TRADE

With the United States



**Speech Delivered by SIR WILFRID LAURIER,
Tuesday, March 7th, 1911.**

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SPEECH DELIVERED BY

SIR WILFRID LAURIER

TUESDAY, MARCH 7th, 1911.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER (Prime Minister.) Mr. Chairman, it is now a full month and more since my hon. friend the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) laid upon the table of the House the agreement which he and my hon. friend and colleague the Minister of Customs (Mr. Paterson) had concluded with the President of the United States, for the improvement of the commercial relations which have long existed between us and our neighbours. From that date to this that agreement has been reviewed, discussed and canvassed, in the press of the country, in meetings of public bodies, and in parliament; and unless I greatly misapprehend the trend of public opinion, unless I fail to read aright the signs of the times, I think I can venture the assertion that the policy which is therein involved has met with the approbation, nay, with the enthusiastic approbation, of a majority of the Canadian people.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Oh, oh. Hear, hear.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. Against this statement of mine I understand that I hear some protest. I shall not stop, Mr. Chairman, to discuss the merits of the respective opinions on that point which we on this side and our friends on the other side of the House entertain. No word of mine, I am sure, would change their views, and I know full well that they will persevere in their views until the evening of the next polling day. I am perfectly aware that the policy has not been universally accepted, that it has met in some quarters, and I may say rather unexpected quarters, rather stubborn opposition. It is a well known fact that at present an organization has been created in the cities of Montreal and Toronto for the purpose of fighting this agreement. To this I have no objection to take, those who do this are perfectly within their rights. Neither will I underestimate the importance of such a movement, and still less the importance of the men who have placed themselves at the head of it. But even whilst fully recognizing the importance of that movement, I do not think there is any serious cause for alarm. General Grant in his Memoirs nar- rates that during the Mexican war he was

in the army of the United States as a young lieutenant. He was riding towards the front in company with a friend, when all of a sudden they heard in front of them a most unearthly howling of wolves. His friend asked him how many he thought there were in the pack, and not wishing to exaggerate he said he thought there must be at least 20. His friend smiled and said nothing. In a few minutes they came in sight of the wolves and there were just two, which had made all that noise. General Grant observes that he thought of this incident in after life, when he heard the noise made by some disappointed men, and he adds they were always more numerous before they were counted. I believe that what is true of the United States is also true of this country. Of the objections that we have heard to this agreement some there are which seem to me to lack singularly in force or oppositeness; others on the contrary are worthy of consideration, not from any inherent strength, but from the circumstances that they are inspired by a strange misconception as to what would be the result and the consequence of the agreement which is now before us. The wonder to me is that there should be any objections at all. Who can deny that we have now reached a stage in our relations with our neighbours which all parties in this House have been seeking for the last 40 years? Who can deny that if, 40 years ago, in the early days of this confederation, if 30 years ago, or 20 years ago, or even 14 years ago, when we took office, it had been possible to obtain such an abatement in the American tariff as is embodied in this agreement there should have been universal rejoicing in this country. The fact, Sir, cannot be denied, the evidence of it is to be found in this that the two parties into which the people of this country are divided, apart on all other questions, were always agreed in the opinion that the relations which existed between us and our neighbours were a blot on our common civilization. There is further proof in this that these two parties in succession, wore a good deal of shoe leather travelling from Ottawa to Washington in order to obtain, if possible, an improvement in these relations. Still better evidence is to be found in this that when Sir John

Macdonald introduced the National Policy in 1878 in this House he did it as a means to an end, with a view of obtaining ultimately reciprocity of trade with our neighbours. The other day I listened with pleasure to my hon. friend the member for Peel (Mr. Blain) narrating the manner in which the National Policy had been brought into the world. He dilated upon everything, he stated everything except this thing, the last of all, that this was, in the mind of Sir John Macdonald, to be a means to the end of obtaining reciprocity of trade which up to that time had been denied to us. My hon. friend's memory was short upon this, the memory his friends is also short and perhaps it would not be amiss if I read him and his friends the motion of Sir John A. Macdonald, if only to show him the immensity of the distance which now separates him and his party and its leaders, from that party and its leaders of that day. This was Sir John Macdonald's motion:

That this House is of opinion that the welfare of Canada requires the adoption of a national policy, which, by a judicious readjustment of the tariff, will benefit and foster the agricultural, the mining, the manufacturing and other interests of the Dominion; that such a policy will retain in Canada thousands of our fellow countrymen now obliged to expatriate themselves in search of the employment denied them at home; that it will restore prosperity to our struggling industries, now so badly depressed, will prevent Canada from being made a sacrifice market, will encourage and develop an active interprovincial trade and moving—as it ought to do—in the direction of a reciprocity of tariffs with our neighbours, so far as the varied interests of Canada may demand, will greatly tend to procure for this country, eventually, a reciprocity of trade.

Here was the policy laid down by the party in 1878 and carried into effect the following year, in 1879, when the Conservative party had been placed in office upon that very identical policy. In the Act bringing that policy into effect, section 6, of the Tariff Act, 1879, was embodied the following permanent offer of reciprocity:

Any or all of the following articles, that is to say: animals of all kinds, green fruit, hay, straw, bran, seeds of all kinds, vegetables (including potatoes and other roots), plants, trees and shrubs, coal and coke, salt, hops, wheat, peas and beans, barley, rye, oats, Indian corn, buckwheat and all other grain, flour of wheat and flour of rye, Indian meal and oatmeal, and flour of meal of any other grain, butter, cheese, fish (salted or smoked), lard, tallow, meats (fresh, salted or smoked), and lumber, may be imported into Canada, free of duty, or at a less rate of duty than is provided by this Act, upon proclamation of the Governor in Council, which may be issued whenever it appears to his satisfaction that similar articles from Canada may be imported into the United States free of duty.

That was in 1879, and we are now in 1911. And what was sought for in 1879 we may now have, and yet men there are who doubt and hesitate and falter and who would erase thirty years of our past history from the book. Pages after pages could be quoted

from speeches delivered by members of the Conservative party in which the American tariff was denounced as unjust, as unfair, as hostile, and now that it is in our power to remove the injustice, the unfairness, and the hostility, men there are who rise against us and tell us: Stop, proceed no further, let the injustice remain, let the hostility remain because upon injustice and hostility the Canadian confederation depends for its existence.

It may be asked: What is the cause of this change of attitude, and how is it that men who all their lives have been in favour of the policy which we now propose to parliament are all of a sudden found to be against it? The other day my hon. friend from North Toronto (Mr. Foster), in his address to this house said: that the Conservative party had in 1891 said good-bye to reciprocity. I must confess that I was staggered at that statement coming from the hon. gentleman, because my reading of history is that the Conservative government of which my hon. friend (Mr. Foster) was a member, and an important member, when they went out of office in 1896, were just as much in favour of reciprocity as they had been at any period of their lives. I must say that the memory of my hon. friend (Mr. Foster) is not always uniformly good—it is good sometimes, but not so good at other times—and I hope my hon. friend will not be offended if I tell him that his memory on this point is singularly treacherous. Shall I review with him the history of his past career upon this point, but before I do so it would be better if I should give to the House the very language he made use of a few days ago:

In 1891 the Liberal-Conservative party made its last endeavour for reciprocity with the United States of America, and after the negotiations were ended and we returned home to Canada, the Liberal-Conservative party declared itself as done with reciprocity from the United States of America, and that henceforward its duty was to develop Canada on the lines of its own self-dependence, and to look to the British market as the great, steady, stable market for our products. The old heresy has not yet been quite purged from the Liberal party, which pursued the quest until 1897. They went to Washington; they tried their efforts; they failed. They came back, and they made declaration in this House of Commons and elsewhere, that as far as they, as a party, were concerned, they were done with reciprocity negotiations with the United States of America.

Now, Sir, let us review the history of the hon. gentleman (Mr. Foster) upon this question. He is aware, as everybody is aware, and no doubt he remembers it very well, that in 1891 parliament was dissolved by the government of the day, of which my hon. friend was a member, for the purpose of placing before the Canadian people the doctrine of reciprocity—not unrestricted reciprocity, as was contended by the Liberal party, but a limited reciprocity, a renewal of the treaty of 1854. The Conservatives

carried the election upon that policy, and as soon as the elections were over my hon. friend (Mr. Foster) and his government made a bee-line for Washington to interview Mr. James G. Blaine, who was then Secretary of State for the United States. But the excursion of my hon. friend on that occasion was not a happy one. Julius Caesar said: I came, I saw, I conquered; but my hon. friend (Mr. Foster) might have said after his trip to Washington: I went, I was seen, I came back; he was ushered in and shown out. But the following year—not abashed at all, not at all discouraged by the cool reception of the previous year, the following year, in 1892, the hon. gentleman made another trip to Washington, and though he was more cordially received on that occasion, still the results were no better. Then, I suppose it is that my hon. friend would have us believe that the Conservative party and the Conservative government, after this last trip to Washington, abandoned forever the doctrine of reciprocity. On that I take issue with the hon. member (Mr. Foster), and I will show him how treacherous his memory is. In 1894 Sir John Thompson, then Prime Minister, made this statement on the floor of the House, speaking from the very place I now occupy:

‘I may say, Mr. Chairman, that communications were indirectly made with the United States government to the effect that Canada would be glad to know of any desire or willingness on the part of the United States government to take measures towards the extension of trade between the two countries, and that Canada would be willing to reciprocate with due regard to the interests and industries of Canada, and with due regard to the revenue which would be necessary to Canada. At a subsequent stage an officer of this government went to Washington for the purpose of seeing whether it was the desire of the United States government or of the committee then having charge of the subject in the House of Representatives, to enter into communication with the government of Canada on the subject of tariff concessions on either side of the line.’

Remember, that was in 1894. And my hon. friend (Mr. Foster) also spoke in that debate. I may say that the occasion of the debate was a charge against the Conservative party by Mr. Charlton, then a prominent member of the Liberal party, that the Conservative government was insincere in its efforts to obtain reciprocity. And, the hon. member (Mr. Foster) spoke for about an hour to convince the House that the charge of Mr. Charlton was unjust to him, that he was perfectly sincere in wishing for reciprocity with our neighbours and, though I cannot quote the whole speech, I may with propriety cite a few sentences of his peroration:

‘When they, the people of the United States, look over the items in our tariff as it shall have passed this House, they will find that line after line, article after article, grade after grade, we have given them a better chance to get into our market than they have given us to get into their market; consequently legislative recipro-

city so far as trade is concerned, shines out from the propositions that the government put before the House to-day in a far greater degree than it does out of the legislation which they have proposed, and which is in progress through their Congress.’

Now, Mr. Chairman, you will see at once how treacherous is the memory of my hon. friend (Mr. Foster). He told us the other day that the Conservative party had said good-bye to reciprocity in 1891, but in 1894 he was proposing to the House resolutions from which, to quote his own words: reciprocity shines out brightly before the eyes of the American public. Then, in 1894, my hon. friend (Mr. Foster) introduced a revision of the tariff, and I have here the Act entitled ‘The Customs Tariff of 1894.’ It is quite true, and I must give my hon. friend this credit, that in the last Tariff Act which he submitted to this House he removed from it the old standing offer of reciprocity which had been introduced in 1879, but that old section of the Act which I have read to the House and which was introduced in 1879 if put aside was immediately reproduced by the hon. gentleman (Mr. Foster) in another form, Section 7 of the Act which my hon. friend’s government passed in 1894 contains this disposition:

The whole or part of the duties hereby imposed upon fish and other products of the fisheries may be remitted as respects either the United States or Newfoundland, or both, upon proclamation of the Governor in Council; which may be issued whenever it appears to his satisfaction that the governments of the United States and Newfoundland, or either of them, have made changes in their tariffs of duties imposed upon articles imported from Canada, in reduction or repeal of the duties in force in the said countries respectively.

Here, then, in the tariff of 1894, is an offer to the United States of reciprocity in fish and fish products. Here are other offers in the same act: Section 8—eggs to be free, when free in the United States; section 10—shingles and pulp wood to be free in Canada when free in the United States; section 11—green or ripe apples, beans, buckwheat, pease, potatoes, rye, rye flour, hay and other vegetables to be free in Canada when free in the United States; section 12—barley and Indian corn to be free in Canada when free in the United States. Sir, this is the way my hon. friend turned his back upon reciprocity in 1894. This is the statute of 1894; and in 1896, when my hon. friend’s government went out of office, that was the policy of himself and his party.

Mr. hon. friend was also good enough to review our career, and he stated that in 1897, when he came into office, the old heresy of reciprocity had not been rubbed out of ourselves. It had not been rubbed out of his own composition either. But when he said that we abandoned the policy of reciprocity in 1897, I take issue with him altogether. We did not abandon our policy of reciprocity in 1897. We made ap-

plication to the United States, but when we found that we had been rebuked, that our advances had not been received as favourably as we thought they should have been, then we thought it was consistent with our dignity not to make any further efforts to obtain reciprocity; and I stated then, speaking for the government, not that we had changed our views on this subject, but that we had ceased to believe that it would be in the interest of the country to have reciprocity, but that we would make no more advances to our neighbours to gain that boon, but that if it came, it would come from them, and not from us. This is the explanation of the change we have had—no change of principle or policy, but simply a position which we thought to be more consistent with our own dignity.

Why, Sir, do I state these facts? Is it simply for the purpose of showing my hon. friend that his memory is at fault? No, Sir, I state these facts to show that the position taken by my hon. friend, that we have no mandate to negotiate with our neighbours, has no foundation whatever. My hon. friend tried to show, from certain words of mine, at the last Imperial conference in 1907, that we had abandoned our position on reciprocity. The words which he quoted were as follows:

There was at one time wanted reciprocity with them (the United States) but our efforts and our offers were negative and put aside, and we have said good-bye to that trade, and we have put all our hopes upon the British trade now.

My hon. friend concluded from these words that there was an abandonment of our policy; but my hon. friend did not do me justice in quoting simply part of a sentence. No one knows better than my hon. friend that it is hardly fair to a man to extract a sentence from a whole passage and quote simply that. I will quote the whole passage, and then the House can draw its own conclusion. This is what I said at the conference:

Between the preferential tariff and the general tariff we have now an intermediate tariff. The object of this intermediate tariff is to enter into negotiations with other communities to have trade arrangements with them. It has been supposed that this was to hit our American neighbours. With our American neighbours we should be only too glad to trade on a better footing than at the present time. We are next door neighbours and in many things we can be their best market, as in many things they can be our best market. We should be glad to trade with them, but it never was intended, nor thought at the time, that this intermediate tariff could apply to the United States. There was at one time wanted reciprocity with them, but our efforts and our offers were negative and put aside, and we have said good-bye to that trade, and we have put all our hopes upon the British trade now.

Sir, there is a different meaning in the words which I uttered at the conference from the meaning sought to be conveyed

by my hon. friend. I was not surprised, however, at the attitude taken by my hon. friend on that occasion. He and I have sat opposite one another for a long time; he knows me and I know him. But I must say that I was more than astonished when I heard my hon. friend from Brandon (Mr. Sifton) the other day take exactly the same position. My hon. friend from Brandon in the course of an able speech, for which everybody will give him his due, said that he had long ago had his doubts about reciprocity, that he had begun to doubt about it as far back as the campaign of 1891. I believe that my hon. friend's conversion has not been so gradual. It has been more sudden than he thinks himself, because my hon. friend was at the Liberal convention of 1893, and he agreed to this resolution which was adopted as part of the policy of the party to which he then belonged:

That a fair and liberal reciprocity treaty would develop the great natural resources of Canada, would enormously increase the trade and commerce between the two countries, would tend to encourage friendly relations between the two peoples, would remove many causes which have in the past provoked irritation and trouble to the governments of both countries, and would promote those kindly relations between the empire and the republic which afford the best guarantee for peace and prosperity;

That the Liberal party is prepared to enter into negotiations with a view to obtaining such a treaty, including a well considered list of manufactured articles, and we are satisfied that any treaty so arranged will receive the assent of Her Majesty's government, without whose approval no treaty can be made.

My hon. friend from Brandon, like my hon. friend from North Toronto (Mr. Foster), has asserted that we have abandoned that policy. I am not conscious of it. It has been dormant, I admit, because we had taken the ground that we would make no more efforts to obtain from our neighbours what had been refused to us. But I deny altogether that there was ever any change by the Liberal party of the policy then laid down in 1893. My hon. friend from Brandon also took the ground, as my hon. friend from North Toronto had done before him, that we had no mandate on this subject from the people, in the last general election. It is true that in 1900, 1904 and 1908 the question of reciprocity was not an issue at all because at that time there was no difference of opinion between the Liberal party and the Conservative party upon that question. There was none so far as I knew, and so far as everybody knew.

I take issue with my hon. friend from North Toronto (Mr. Foster) and my hon. friend from Brandon (Mr. Sifton) when they tell us that the parliament of Canada is debarred from dealing with any question which has not been discussed at the previous general election. That is not in accord with the constitutional history of Great Britain or of Canada either, as I have read

it. Let me ask my hon. friends what mandate had the government of Lord Elgin in 1858 when it went to Washington to obtain reciprocity? Had that question ever been put before the people? Had it been an issue the last time the people's representatives had gone before them? Not at all. Let me ask further, what mandate had the government of 1864 to put through parliament the resolution which proposed confederation? Had that question of confederation ever been put before the people of united Canada? No, not a word about it had ever been heard. The only question then raised was that of representation by population. Yet the government of Sir John Macdonald and the Hon. Geo. Brown—because the two men were united on that occasion—brought in a resolution which was nothing more nor less than a complete transformation of our then condition. When Canada assented, in 1871, to the fishery stipulations in the Washington treaty of that year, had that question ever been put before the people? No, it was unknown to them. It never had been debated before. In the face, therefore, of these precedents, it is childish for any man to challenge the right of this government to follow the course it is doing.

But, again, I ask, what is the cause of the change of attitude which we see on the other side of the House? That cause cannot but be flattering to this government. The only reason given is that Canada today is prosperous as she never was before. If Canada were still in the position in which we found it when we took office in 1896, with its vast fertile lands still unoccupied and untilled, with its natural resources dormant as they had been since the early days of creation, with its transportation facilities still in the most rudimentary stage, with industry stagnant, with agriculture unremunerative—were Canada still in that position, I have no doubt that today the policy we are proposing would be received with favour and the air would resound with paeans of exultation. But instead of being in that condition the country is prosperous, extraordinarily prosperous, and we are told by hon. gentlemen opposite: Do not go any further, fold your arms and let well enough alone. Well, what is this country? What are we? Is this Canada, or is this China?

Some hon. MEMBERS. Hear, hear.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. The Chinese have left well enough alone for 4,000 years. 4,000 years ago they were probably the first nation on earth, and so satisfied were they that they refused to move. They let well enough alone for 4,000 years. If a reformer showed his head among them he was ruthlessly put down and told to let well enough alone. It is said—and I believe it is his-

torically true—that gunpowder was invented by an ingenious Chinaman, but the people of China never used gunpowder for the defence of their territory, though often exposed to invasion. They depended on the great dragon to sweep off their enemies from the face of the earth by the fire from his eyes. They let well enough alone. It was an ingenious Chinaman who invented the compass, but they never used it for navigation, and for 4,000 years their little junks circulated around their shores, never getting away from the sight of land. They let well enough alone.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Hear, hear.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. And we are asked to adopt this Chinese policy. But, Sir, this is Canada, and we shall have to go on whether hon. gentlemen opposite will follow or not. We will drag them on, even against their will.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Hear, hear.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. That is our policy. We must go on. Some years ago a young lady showed me her album, which as a young girl she had shown to Sir John Macdonald, and asked him to write in it the motto of his life. And he wrote on it this motto: Hope on, hope ever. How far the Conservative party is from that motto to-day!

Some hon. MEMBERS. Hear, hear.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. But we shall go on with our policy. Our policy is 'advance,' and if it be wrong we shall submit willingly to the judgment of the Canadian people, and to the punishment which ought to be given every man who brings in a wrong policy. But this is our policy. Our policy has been, is and will be, so long as the Canadian people continue to place in us the confidence they have shown us during 15 years—and that policy is to seek markets wherever markets are to be found. We are above all an agricultural people, our chief wealth is the growth of these products of the temperate zone, fruits, cereals and vegetables, and it is our boast—not an idle boast, but a boast founded on actual experience—that in cereals, vegetables and fruits we can, without exaggeration, beat the world.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Hear, hear.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. At the northern extremity of the temperate zone, our cereals have more strength, our fruit has better flavour, our vegetables have more delicacy than similar productions from other parts of the world and under free competition, not barred in any way by tariff legislation, they will displace all

other products on the tables of the wealthy. Our object to-day is to open the door of the American market, to open the door of a nation of 90,000,000, which has been closed to us for the last 50 years, and when we are now on the eve of reaching that long sought goal, we are met by objection after objection, we are deluged by a plethora of sophistry, we are told that if such an arrangement is to go into effect and Canadian vegetables, cereals and fruits, can cross the boundary line and be eaten free of duty by the American people it will be all over with the Canadian confederation, and even the British Empire will reel and rock upon its foundations.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Hear, hear.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. Sir, let us discard these freaks of unreasoning panic, let us approach this question from the point of view of common sense, from the basis of first principles.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Hear, hear.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. Let us, I say, approach the question from the point of view of common sense—and I am glad that my remarks on that point evoke some response from the other side; we will see how far they will go. If, Sir, I were to state to my hon. friends on the other side that amongst civilized mankind, all those who work, work with the object of disposing of the product of their labour, I should be told, this is a truism that is running in the street. If I were to add that the man who works has the legitimate ambition of getting the greatest possible remuneration for his labour, I should be told, this is a mere truism. If I were to say that the man who works, will be better remunerated the more clients he has, seeking the products of his labour, I should be told, this is a truism. And yet, this is the very thing, this very truism, which is embodied in the proposition now before you. All that we ask under these resolutions is to obtain for the man who works in the fields, the best possible remuneration for his labour. And does that proposition require any defence? Is it not simply on the line of common sense? Is it not the first of all principles? How, then, is it that it is not accepted at once? I will give the reasons. I will try to be fair in giving these reasons. But, before I proceed further, I must say that it seems to me that the House of Commons and the Canadian people at large, owe a debt of gratitude to my hon. friend the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) and my hon. friend the Minister of Customs (Mr. Paterson) for having obtained from our neighbours, such an advantageous arrangement, and having obtained it without the sacrifice of any Canadian interest. Mr. Chairman, here perhaps I may be permit-

ted to say that, in my opinion, the discussion which has taken place up to this time has been carried on upon a high level. Of course, I do not agree with my hon. friends on the other side who have taken part in the discussion, but I pay them the tribute, one and all, of having carried on the discussion in a fair manner, in a manner which, I think, deserves acknowledgment on our part, and reflects credit upon themselves. I am sorry that to this I have to make an exception in the person of my hon. friend from North Toronto (Mr. Foster). My hon. friend from North Toronto was not satisfied to criticize the arrangement, in which, indeed, he would have been within his right, but he was unduly unfair in trying to depreciate not only the agreement but those who had made it. He spoke of my hon. friend the Minister of Finance, and my hon. friend the Minister of Customs, as being very ordinary men. He repeated this two or three times, speaking pointedly of my hon. friend the Minister of Finance. Well, if my hon. friend from North Toronto has not learned it yet he may learn it now, that if he has to his credit one-half the achievements of my hon. friend the Minister of Finance he would have reason to be more proud of his career than he can be. Then, he went over to the members of the cabinet, this one and that one, and at last he came to my poor humble self; and of my poor humble self he spoke as follows:

Men of such fine financial mind and business acumen as the right hon. gentleman who leads the government and the party.

I have never posed as a man of fine financial mind, or of business acumen; but when I see the pretensions put up by some men who dabble in finance and business, I am surprised at my modesty. If I had dabbled in finance and business, I am prepared to admit, I should have perhaps made a sad mess of it. But I could not have been worse than my hon. friend. If, after having posed as a business man and financier, I had nothing to show but a record of failures, I would go and hide myself for very shame, and be very chary to throw stones into other people's gardens, for fear they should be returned to me with compound interest.

I stated a moment ago that the agreement we made is simply to get better prices for the product of the Canadian farmers. This is a proposition so obvious that I am surprised it should have received the treatment it has received on the part of our friends opposite. But the objections made to this agreement are not to be found within the four corners of the same; they are all based upon extraneous grounds. The opposition, the Conservative party, are against this agreement because, as they tell us, it will produce consequences which will be deplorable for this country—I have

listened with some care to nearly all the speeches that have been delivered in this House on this question, and those which I had not the opportunity to hear, I have read with equal care; and I think I am fair in stating that the objections made to this arrangement are fourfold. The first objection is that the effect will be to deflect the carrying trade from Canadian channels to American channels. The second is that it will destroy our natural resources. The third is that it will imperil our industries. And the fourth—and certainly not the least—is that it will dissolve our autonomy and land us ultimately in the American Republic. I think I have there fairly stated what are the objections of hon. gentlemen on the other side; and the House will perhaps permit me to discuss them. Let us take the first—the objection that this arrangement is going to deflect trade from Canadian channels into American channels. This question is to be discussed from two points of view: from the point of view of the goods going from Canada into the United States for the purpose of being carried over to Great Britain, and goods going from Canada to the United States for consumption therein. Now, regarding the first, those goods sent from Canada to the United States, to be carried to Great Britain, in what way does this arrangement undo the system now in existence? It does not affect it one iota. At the present time, goods go from Canada to be shipped from Boston, New York, or any American port without paying duty. In the same way American goods come to Canada to be shipped out by Montreal, Halifax or St. John without paying duty. A cargo of wheat can leave Winnipeg for New York, and there be discharged and put on board ship without duty being demanded. A cargo of grain can leave Minneapolis to be taken to Montreal and shipped thence without paying duty. This is by virtue of the bondage privilege which has been given by each government to the other, for the purpose of transportation. It has been in existence for something like sixty years, and I have never heard a complaint that it was unfair to one party or to the other. There was a time when I felt nervous on reflecting that the bonding privilege was simply an act of good will on the part of the United States towards us. That was the time when we had no communication of our own to the sea. But now that we have a continuous communication on Canadian soil from sea to sea, we feel that the United States can remove the bonding privilege any time they please, and if they do so they will suffer more than we shall. But, Sir, our condition in that respect is absolutely safe, whether this treaty passes or not.

Now, Sir, it does not follow that for my part I am opposed to the policy of retaining in our own channels Canadian trade;

on the contrary, I am very solicitous in that respect, and I think I can show by the records of this government that we have favoured the building of lines through Canadian territory from east to west with the intent of keeping trade in our own channels. But I may say this to the hon. member for North Toronto (Mr. Foster), to the leader of the opposition (Mr. Borden), and to the member for Brandon (Mr. Sifton) especially, that if they expect to keep trade within Canadian channels by legislative enactment, by trade impediments, they make the greatest of all mistakes, a mistake which was tried once and had to be abandoned. Sir, when the Canadian Pacific railway was created in 1881 it was with the avowed policy of creating a channel of communication between east and west; the policy was to keep, so far as legislation could do it, Canadian trade in Canadian channels. Now my hon. friend from North Toronto commented upon the aspect of our policy rather severely, and with great force of language as to the results upon the credit of Canada, as to those who had invested their money in these enterprises, when they learn that by this legislation the lines east and west could be diverted from channels running east and west to channels running north and south. This is the language which the hon. member for North Toronto made use of on that occasion, and I quote it in view of what I shall say a few minutes later:

Take the capital invested in your east and west lines of communication: Was it ever dreamed in Britain, Sir, that the time would come when a change of policy would be inaugurated by the men who petitioned for the money, who plead for the investment of capital and got it at long last. Was it ever dreamed that when this capital was severely fixed and invested, the long lateral lines of railway should be tapped every few miles by communication to draw off the trade intended for them to southern routes and do away with the long haul of the east and west lines?

My hon. friend should have had in his mind when he spoke that way the circumstance that in the contract with the Canadian Pacific Railway company precautions had been taken to keep the trade flowing east and west. In that contract with the Canadian Pacific Railway Company the following clause was inserted as clause 15:

For twenty years from the date hereof no line of railway shall be authorized by the Dominion parliament to be constructed south of the Canadian Pacific railway from any point at or near the Canadian Pacific railway, except such line as shall run southwest or to the eastward of southward, not to within fifteen miles of latitude 49.

Mark the words. The men who invested their money in that enterprise had this inducement, that the Canadian government would not for twenty years permit any railway to be built south of the line of the Canadian Pacific Railway, and that for fifteen miles south of

the boundary line there should be absolutely no railway at all. Therefore, under those circumstances, trade could not be diverted from Canadian to American channels. That was the extreme precaution which was taken by the government of that day, that was a restriction upon the energy, upon the enterprise of the people of the west which was to last for twenty years. Under that restriction the capitalists of the world were invited to put their money into the enterprise, and they did it, upon the faith of the Canadian government. How long did this restriction last? Did it last twenty years? Sir, it lasted just six years, and at last, after six years, the Canadian government had to recall that legislation. And how did it occur. This is one of the most dramatic pages of the history of our country, and no one knows it better than my hon. friend from Brandon. I do not know if he was then in the legislature, but I know he was a young politician, and he could not have been indifferent to what was taking place. There was a restriction put upon the energy, upon the enterprise of the people of the west, and of the province of Manitoba in particular. The people of Manitoba wanted power to trade north and south, they wanted to trade with their neighbours, the American people, they wanted to have railway communication with them. But there was a statute, there was an Act of parliament, there was the authority of the Canadian government which prevented them from trading with their neighbours to the south, and the Canadian government attempted for six years to keep that legislation in force. The legislature of Manitoba passed Acts chartering railways, allowing them to cross that zone of territory which the government was attempting to reserve from civilization and from the benefits thereof. The legislature of Manitoba wanted railways to communicate north and south, they chartered railways to that effect, and these charters were disallowed one after another, disallowed in 1881, disallowed in 1882, disallowed in 1883, disallowed in 1884, disallowed in 1885, disallowed in 1886, disallowed in 1887. Year after year the legislature of Manitoba petitioned this government, petitioned parliament, to do away with this restriction, and year after year that prayer was denied. At last in 1887, after this restriction put upon their energy, the government of Manitoba, with the assent of the whole people of Manitoba, passed another Act authorizing a railway to run from Winnipeg to the boundary line where it would reach the American system of railways, and this Act was disallowed. The province passed beyond that disallowance, and proceeded to build the railway, though there was no legislation empowering them to do so. It was practically an act of rebellion. My hon. friends from Manitoba, my hon. friend from Brandon, remembers that on a certain

day in the month of October, 1887, when the Canadian Pacific Railway Company challenged the right of the province to cross their line towards the south, 200 citizens from the city of Winnipeg, members of the government, members of the legislature, financial men, professional men, merchants, bankers, went in a body to the point of crossing determined to repel force by force, to allow the crossing of the Canadian Pacific railway by the provincial line. Then, Sir, the Canadian government came down, and at the following session the privilege was repealed, a privilege that had to be bought back by the Canadian government from the Canadian Pacific railway. Now I ask the hon. member for North Toronto what became then of those investors who had put their money into the Canadian Pacific railway upon the faith of the Canadian government. Were they ruined by it? What became of this turgid rhetoric of my hon. friend which I read a moment ago:

Take the capital invested in your east and west lines of communication: Was it ever dreamed in England, Sir, that the time would come when a change of policy would be inaugurated by the men who petitioned for the money, who plead for the investment of capital and got it at long last?

No, they did not dream of it, but it was done all the same, and the result was that their stock, which was worth at that time 30, has now reached 213. I repeat, if you attempt to prevent the people from trading in natural channels, no amount of legislation will accomplish that object, but let nature alone, and then the trade will be carried on on Canadian lines. Why? Because we have the interior and the shorter and the better lines. Take the condition of things to-day: Winnipeg can trade with Europe by way of the United States, it can trade with Europe by way of Canada. The line of railway from Winnipeg to Montreal is 1,414 miles, and from Montreal to Liverpool 2,760 miles, a total of 4,174 miles. From Winnipeg to New York by way of Minneapolis, Chicago and the American lines, the distance is 1,790 miles, and from New York to Montreal 3,026 miles, a total distance of 4,826 miles. The American line is 4,826 miles, the Canadian line 4,174 miles, a difference in favour of the Canadian line of 652 miles. Do you require any legislation, I want to know, to compel trade to choose the Canadian channel? Is it not obvious that for very self-respect trade will always take the Canadian line, because it is the shorter one? Well, Sir, that is not all. We have had experience as to what has happened, and our experience has been that our trade over the Canadian channels has increased by leaps and bounds as against the trade by the American channels. In 1900 the total amount of Canadian wheat exported from Montreal was 4,000,000 bushels; in 1910 it had increased

from four million bushels to 14,140,000 bushels. Of American wheat the total number of bushels exported from Montreal in 1900 was 5,000,000 bushels, and in 1911 that had increased to 10,000,000 bushels. So, therefore, there is no doubt on this point, the Canadian line must have the preference, because the Canadian line is the best and the shortest. But, Sir, the question now has to be examined from the point of view of goods which are exported from Canada to the United States with a view to consumption in that country. My hon. friend the leader of the opposition (Mr. Borden, Halifax), when he spoke upon this subject, stated that our policy ought to be to favour interprovincial trade. To this, Sir, everybody agrees; we all favour interprovincial trade in preference to trade with other nations, and I am prepared to admit with my hon. friend that the home market is the best for all kinds of products. But I have to observe to my hon. friend that this whole amount of our natural products, and my hon. friend will not contend that the Canadian people can consume the whole production of our natural products. My hon. friend from Brandon (Mr. Sifton) the other day stated that the home market would require about 80 per cent. of our products. It is difficult to secure reliable statistics upon this point, so as to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion how much of meat, of eggs, and of fruit is consumed by a population. This depends much on the means and wealth of population, but it is possible to obtain not only satisfactory, but conclusive evidence and statistics as to the amount of wheat which is consumed by a population, and it is far less than 80 per cent. of our production. Thirty years ago, or thereabouts, the opinion was held that the consumption of wheat was about five bushels per head, and to-day I am satisfied it is much larger. I discussed the matter some few weeks ago with a prominent miller, and his opinion is that at the present time the consumption of wheat is between 6 bushels and 7 bushels per head. If that be the case, the Canadian consumption of wheat, assuming a population of 8,000,000, would be about 50,000,000 bushels. If that be the proportion of the consumption to the production of Canada, then Canada consumes only 50 per cent. of her production of wheat. Where is the balance to go? My hon. friend will tell me we have the English market. So we have, the English market quite ample enough to take the surplus production of wheat in this country for many years to come, although we are sure the production will increase tenfold by and by.

But, Sir, there are other products than wheat, which the British market cannot absorb, or cannot absorb with the same convenience as the American market can. The hon. member for Brandon (Mr. Sifton)

spoke of hay in Quebec, and rather hinted, although he did not say so, that the sending abroad of hay is bad business for the farmer. I can tell my hon. friend from Brandon (Mr. Sifton) that no hay will be exported from the hillsides of the eastern townships of the province of Quebec, but as the Minister of Agriculture reminded my hon. friend from Brandon, we have in the province of Quebec natural meadows, which require no tillage, and upon which the best of timothy has been grown, not for 50 years, but for 100 years. Along the two shores of Lake St. Peter there are natural meadows a few inches only above the level of the water, which are yearly flooded, and which, to the knowledge of every one in the province, have been for a hundred years or more growing hay and nothing else. The counties of Berthier, Montmagny and St. Maurice, on the north shore, and the counties of Nicolet, Yamaska and Richelieu on the south, are so situated that they have a population of, perhaps, 1,000, who are growers of hay and for whom this treaty, if it becomes law, will be the most positive boon. To-day they cannot sell any hay in the United States because there is a duty of \$4 a ton. Let the duty be removed and immediately there will be an immense trade in that section of the community, as there was some 30 years ago. The same thing applies in the case of eggs, poultry and mining products. For this reason it is to our advantage that we should have not only the British market, but the American market also. The hon. member for Brandon (Mr. Sifton) made the argument that if you were to adopt this arrangement our present facilities for transportation to Great Britain would become useless. I differ from him altogether. The trade will go on just the same, but we will raise more of those commodities than we raised before.

Then there is the cattle trade. Years ago we had a cattle trade with Great Britain. We have some yet, but it is not as large as it ought to be, because everybody knows that it has been constantly retarded by the embargo put on it some years ago or so, and, therefore, if we are not able to sell all the cattle we can raise in Great Britain there is a ready market in the United States.

Now, I come to a very important point. It has been stated in this discussion, and repeated in the press; indeed, the statement has been alluded to in Great Britain, that by this arrangement we were putting an end to every possibility of mutual preferential trade with Great Britain. My hon. friend from Brandon made that argument, and I have heard it from the other side of the House. I take positive issue with that statement; and I say more: that statement does not bear criticism; it has only to be analyzed for its falseness to be shown. Sir, we on this side of the House have never taken part, we have refused to

take part, in the controversy which has been long going on in England on the question of mutual preferential trade. We would not take any part in the contest between the tariff reformers and the free traders. We thought it would not be dignified, we thought it would not be any part of our business, we thought it would be an act of imprudence for us to take part in this controversy, whether on the one side of the question or the other, and we preferred to remain silent upon that point, having laid our policy before the English people. And what was our policy? Our policy was set forth by the Canadian ministers in Great Britain at the conference of 1902, and it was in these words:

The Canadian ministers stated that if they could be assured that the imperial government would accept the principle of preferential trade generally, and particularly grant to the food products of Canada in the United Kingdom exemption from duties now levied or hereafter imposed, they (the Canadian ministers) would be prepared to go further into the subject and endeavour to give to the British manufacturer some increased advantage over his foreign competitors in the markets of Canada.

This was our policy laid down at the Imperial Conference of 1902. This is our policy in this year 1911 at the conference which is soon to take place. We have been told by the other side of the House that the action we have taken with regard to this agreement has made it impossible to implement the policy thus laid down. How can that be argued seriously? The Canadian ministers at the conference in 1902 stated that they were prepared to give to Great Britain a preference on manufactured goods in our market if Great Britain would give us preference on our natural products in her market. Great Britain does not export many natural products; on the contrary she is a large importer of natural products. We are exporters not of manufactured products, but of natural products, and we are large importers of manufactured products, and we have given to the Americans a free entrance to our markets only for their natural products as they have given us a free entrance to their market for our natural products and how can that affect the British Islands? Surely in no way at all can it affect our trade with Britain. The United States can enter our market with their natural products, but it is certain that England will never send a bushel of any kind of grain to Canada. However, England can give us a preference in her market for our natural products if she chooses to change her policy, and then we are prepared to give her upon her manufactured products a corresponding advantage. Sir, the policy of Canada is just the same as it was three months ago when this arrangement was made; nay, it is the same to-day as it has been for the last 12 years and it will be the policy of the Canadian government at the next Imperial Confer-

ence which will open in May next. What then of all the shrieks and lamentations and imprecations we have heard from all sides upon this point? Surely the question has not been properly thought out for if it were it would have answered itself. Perhaps it is just as well now, since I am reviewing all the objections to this agreement, that I should take up another point which has been made against it and which has drawn many a tear from the eyes of some gentlemen sitting on the other side. I refer to the consequences of the agreement on what are known as the Most Favoured Nations. There are in existence certain old treaties between England and other countries in which it is provided that if England or any of her colonies should give a preference to any country in the world the same treatment shall be given to those nations with which England has these old treaties. These treaties were in the past of so little consequence that we never troubled about them. When in 1896 we found in our way the treaty with Germany and the treaty with Belgium we asked for the renunciation of these treaties. Similar treaties with other countries were not in our way, and, therefore, we did not trouble about them. However, all of a sudden these treaties have assumed enormous magnitude in the eyes of some, and a few days ago we heard a gentleman on the other side of the House say that we were practically opening our doors to the whole world. Well, the whole world is a big phrase, but let us examine in detail what it is composed of in this sense. The whole world in detail, so far as these treaties are concerned comprises Venezuela, Switzerland, Sweden, Spain, Russia, Japan, Denmark, Columbia, Bolivia (and who ever heard of any trade with Bolivia), Austria-Hungary, and the Argentine Republic. Let us see what our trade is with these nations. All told last year we exported to Venezuela \$14,000 worth and we actually imported from Venezuela \$53,000 worth, a trade which would probably supply the next corner grocery. And, in this \$53,000 worth of trade of Venezuela there is not included any of the natural products we mention in our agreement with the United States. Then from Switzerland we imported \$2,633,000 worth and we exported to Switzerland \$10,000 worth, and our imports from Switzerland were chiefly silks and cottons and manufactures of silks and cottons. Sweden, our exports last year were \$111,000, and our imports \$207,000, and there was not a dollar's worth of anything included in the agreement. We exported to Spain last year \$51,000 worth, and imported from Spain \$1,040,000 worth, and our imports included fruits, but they were oranges and tropical fruits of that character such as are not provided for in the agreement at all. With Russia, our exports were \$59,000 last year and our imports \$138,000 and I cannot find among

them a single article which would come within the scope of the agreement. To Norway and Sweden our exports were \$487,000 and our imports \$108,000, and amongst these there are some fish, and Norway would have the benefit of free fish under this agreement and that is the first item we find which is at all affected. Then, we have some trade with Japan, but does any one imagine that Japan will send us wheat or butter or cereals? With Denmark we had some trade, but not very extensive, our exports being \$425,000 and our imports \$86,000, and while Denmark is a butter exporting country not a pound of butter came to Canada from Denmark. Then, with the State of Columbia our exports were \$42,000 and our imports \$23,000, but they included nothing mentioned in the arrangement. Bolivia—we have not any trade with it; we do not import anything from it or export anything to it. Austria-Hungary—our imports are \$1,410,000 and our exports \$60,000; the imports are chiefly laces and things of that kind. Then I come to the last—the Argentine Republic; our total exports are \$2,869,000, and our total imports \$2,181,000; and I find that we have not imported from the Argentine a single article that is included in this agreement. The Argentine, however, is a wheat-growing country, and it exports wheat; but if ever the Argentine Republic sends wheat to Canada, there is no reason why Canada should not send wheat to the Argentine, so that objection is wholly exploded and may be dismissed without further reference.

Another objection which has been taken to this agreement is that it will destroy our natural resources. My hon. friend from North Toronto was particularly indignant on this point. He grew eloquent and asked us what we meant by establishing a Conservation Commission for the preservation of our natural resources and then proceeding with ruthless hands to destroy their work. I have to say to my hon. friend that the Commission for the preservation of our natural resources was intended to deal not at all with questions of political economy, but with questions of physical science. My hon. friend told us that we should preserve our natural resources for our children and for our children's children; but I ask my hon. friend, what is the object of these natural resources? Soil, water, forests, minerals, have been given to man by the Creator for the use of man, and all civilized nations have acted accordingly. Why did our ancestors leave their respective lands and come to this country and take it from the Indians if it was not for the purpose of taking hold of the natural resources of the country and using them for their benefit? The Indians were men after the heart of my hon. friend from North Toronto—they were great preservers of natural resources. They

kept them not for themselves, but for their children and the children of their children. They never used them to any great extent. The territory they inhabited contained many minerals; but when our ancestors came here they found the Indians using implements made of bone and stone. They never cultivated the soil; they lived on fish and game. They were in the midst of immense forests, but they never felled a tree to build a house. They lived beside the most noble streams in the world, but they did not use them to turn a wheel; they never even used water to wash. They were people after the heart of my hon. friend from North Toronto. Our ancestors who came here came to enjoy the natural resources of the land. Unfortunately, they not only used, but also abused them. It is the reproach of the white settler that if he has used these natural resources, he has been imprudent, and has destroyed them much more wantonly than he has consumed them for his own benefit. It is charged to-day against the Canadian farmer that he is not cultivating the soil, but mining it, and taking all the fertility out of it. It is charged against the Canadian lumberman that he is not only cropping the lumber, as he should, but in his operations, is destroying much more than he uses. I think it is admitted that in this valley of the Ottawa, where timber has been cut for the last one hundred years, the lumbermen have destroyed more timber than they have ever carried away. Sir, the object of the Conservation Commission is simply to instruct the farmers, the lumbermen, and others, how to use the natural resources of the country. But if that be the case, the Commission, which is ably presided over by my hon. friend from Brandon, will do an immense service in showing all our people how to use these resources with prudence, so that they will be preserved for our children and our children's children.

But, Sir, what has this to do with this agreement? My hon. friend says that our resources will be taken by the Americans. Well, the Americans will take them if they pay for them; but whether they take them or not, whether this agreement goes into force or not, the natural resources of the country will be made use of, and I hope in a more prudent manner than they are at the present time. My hon. friend from North Toronto need have no further apprehension on that point.

I pass to a more important objection, really the only objection of any consequence that I know of. The objection is that this agreement will imperil our industries. How will it imperil our industries? This agreement is concerned chiefly with natural products. There are no manufactured products dealt with in it, except agricultural implements. In negotiating this agreement we

have adhered strictly to the terms of the resolution which was adopted at the Liberal Convention of 1893, in which the Liberal party declared for a treaty of reciprocity in natural products and a carefully-considered list of manufactured products. Why did we put this restriction in our resolution? Why did we state in so many words that the reciprocity which we would negotiate, if it ever became our lot to do so, would be general for natural products, and would be confined to a carefully prepared list of manufactured products? Because, Sir, there is a vast difference between reciprocity in natural products and reciprocity in manufactured goods. This is the reason we have acted with this prudence. I was not present at the Conference which took place between my two friends beside me and Mr. Knox; but it is not a great effort of imagination to suppose that the Americans were far more concerned about obtaining reciprocity in manufactured products than in natural products; but our negotiators would not consent to any reciprocity in manufactured products, but insisted on limiting the agreement simply to such manufactured products as agricultural implements.

Well, we limited our negotiations to that; and in doing this, I know that we have not gone as far as certain sections of the community wanted us to go. A certain section wanted free implements altogether, but we did not think it prudent or advisable to go that far. And why? The reason is that the men on the treasury benches, who are responsible, recognize in tariff matters the wide difference between manufactured and natural products. It is easy enough to put up a customs duty or enact a protective duty, but it is always a difficult task to decrease or remove such a duty. The reason is well known. It is obvious that if you raise the customs duty or impose a protective duty you create at once a fictitious economical atmosphere; and if the industries established under the tariff and under that temperature and condition, have to face suddenly a removal of the duty, you might annihilate in the course of one night millions of capital and reduce to non-employment thousands of operatives. That is why we have acted as we have done. We have gone very cautiously, with great care into this agreement. When we came into office in 1896, we had the same problem before us, the same consideration weighed upon us, and we took the utmost possible precaution—whilst giving as we were bound to do, to the consuming public an abatement of the tariff—we took every precaution in so doing not to injure any existing industry, and I think we have been successful.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Hear, hear.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. Although it

was part of our policy to obtain reciprocity industry. The only industry affected is fully in so doing and have not injured any with the United States, we have acted carefully that of agricultural implements, on some of which the duty has been reduced from 17½ per cent. to 15 and on other from 20 per cent. to 15 per cent. It would have been pleasing to myself at all events to have gone beyond that, but we considered that if we did, we would perhaps not do justice to the large number who have invested money in these establishments.

This government does not exist for the farmers alone or the manufacturers alone or for any one class, but for the manufacturers and farmers and for all the classes which compose our nation.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Hear, hear.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. I do not admit that there should be any antagonism between class and class. I do not admit that there should be any antagonism between the manufacturer and the farmer. The manufacturer is the best friend of the farmer, and the farmer is the best friend of the manufacturer. Let them walk hand in hand, let each profit by the trade of the other; but so far as we are concerned, for 14 years we have administered the government of this country on these lines, trying to do away with collisions between class and class trying to keep all abreast of one another, keeping always in mind the motto: Freedom for all and privileges for none. That has been our policy and that policy we shall continue. There are men who believe that we are going to recklessly ruin industry and capital. Capital is timid under all circumstances and the man who is at the head of affairs and the ministers who assist him, would not be worthy of the public confidence if they were not always careful to see that capital will be safe, whenever it is invested in any industry in this country.

Mr. BURRELL. Would my right hon. friend permit me one question? Does not the very argument he has put up on behalf of the manufacturers apply with crushing force to the fruit industry?

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. Not in the least. My hon. friend will observe that we have not obtained for the manufacturers a free market on the other side of the line, but we have obtained a free market for the fruit growers.

Mr. BORDEN (Halifax). Might I ask a question?

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. One is enough, I think.

Mr. BORDEN (Halifax). I think so, too.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. I do not ob-

ject to interruptions, but when a man has been on his feet for some time and is anxious to get through, he does not care to enter into a controversy which would force him to more exertion. But I may say to my hon. friend that when in committee, I shall be very happy to answer all these questions.

Mr. CURRIE (Simcoe). I understand that under the rules, when a matter is being discussed in committee, a minister of the Crown, if he is asked a question, is bound to answer, and has not the right to dispute the right of any member to ask a question. I have never heard of such a thing; it is an innovation.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER. There is no such rule. The hon. member who has the floor is the only man who has the right to speak to the question. No other member has the right to interrupt either with a remark or a question. Such interruptions are permitted frequently, and parliamentarians have said that they are the spice of debate, but they are entirely limited to such interruptions or questions as the speaker who has the floor at the moment will allow. There is no distinction in that respect between a minister and an ordinary member.

Mr. CURRIE (Simcoe). I am quite willing, Mr. Chairman, to bow to your ruling, but I say that it is an innovation in parliamentary practice.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER. If the hon. member does not accept the ruling of the chair, he is at liberty to appeal to the House, but not to discuss the ruling.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. I may say to my hon. friend that it is not an innovation and that of course a minister is bound to answer questions, but there is a time to answer them and when that time comes, I shall be happy to reply. Before I depart from this subject, let me say that to carry out this agreement, everything has been done, we were careful of all interests and following in the line established in 1896, namely, that stability of tariff is one of the elements of success in all enterprises.

I now come to the last of the objections raised against us. If it is difficult to find within the four corners of this agreement the latent, the insipient destruction of our industries, it is still more difficult to find therein the fatal germ which is to dissolve our autonomy, finally landing it into the American Republic. Autonomy! They speak of autonomy. Why it was only last year we heard the same men rebuke us because we paid too much attention to autonomy.

But, whether they approve of autonomy, or whether they combat it, they show clearly, in one instance as in the other, that they never understood or appreciated the

true meaning of the word. The new-born zeal for autonomy, when reduced to actual exposition, is generally expressed somewhat in this way. There may be, perhaps, no danger to our autonomy in this agreement itself; but this is only a first step that will be followed by others. This, they tell us, is a trade agreement confined to natural products, another time the agreement will be extended to manufactured products; this will be followed by commercial union and lastly by political union. Such logic, Sir, will carry you any distance, in any direction, to any conclusion which hope, fear or any other passion may suggest. With such logic the world has long been familiar. Was there ever, in any land, at any time, a reform proposed which was not immediately denounced as revolution by all the forces of reaction? With this logic we have been particularly familiar in this country ever since the first days of responsible government. Open the records of our own old discussions, and you will find that when the reformers of that day were asking for responsible government, all the Tories denounced the idea as being the first step towards annexation. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at that, if, upon this occasion, the whole Conservative party have been moved by the old instincts of Toryism. But the manner in which this reform which we now bring forward is opposed, will be seen by anybody who examines the question, to be an insult to the intelligence and character of the Canadian people. What are the arguments we hear against the agreement to justify the position which is taken that this is a first step towards the dissolution of our autonomy? We are told that this agreement may, perhaps, lead to certain satisfactory results for some time, but that later it may be removed, and if removed, may be followed by a high protectionist tariff, and under such circumstances the Canadian people would not have the stamina to resist the dislocation of trade but would be forced to seek refuge in the American union. This is the argument which we have heard from the leader of the opposition (Mr. Borden, Halifax); this is the argument of my hon. friend from North Toronto (Mr. Foster). Nay, this is even the argument we have heard from my hon. friend from Brandon (Mr. Sifton), who, on this occasion of all occasions, has deserted the principles of Liberalism to join the principles of Conservatism. Let me refer to the resolutions of the Board of Trade of Toronto—I take these because they contain in condensed form all the arguments with which we have been deluged in this House. The third resolution says:

3. That any present benefit to any section of Canada or to any interest therein which might accrue from said agreement would be more than offset by the loss and injury to other sections and interests.

There is an admission that in this agreement there will be a benefit at least to some sections of the community. It may be qualified, but it is there all the same. And the fourth and fifth resolutions read:

4. That the proposed agreement would weaken the ties that bind Canada to the empire.

5. That to avoid the disruption of trade which after some years under said agreement would result were said agreement terminated and a protective tariff against Canada established by the United States, Canada would be forced to closer trade relations with them, which would still further weaken those ties and make it more difficult to avert political union with the United States.

Mark those words—'Canada would be forced to closer trade relations. Well, Sir, if Canada would be forced, what would force it? Nations there have been which, in the face of a great emergency, a great national calamity, would rise to the occasion, and even the women throw their jewels and ornaments into the common fund for the protection of the country. But we are told here by Canadian Tories that if a crisis, an economic crisis, were to arise in which their pockets would be liable to suffer, they would hesitate between their pockets and their loyalty.

Sir, the Tories of fifty years ago were made of sterner stuff. In 1854, the treaty which was negotiated by Lord Elgin, with Francis Hincks as his Prime Minister, resulted in immediate prosperity. Ten years afterwards the treaty was repealed, and a high protective tariff substituted for it. At that time, did Canadians falter? Did they hesitate? Were they forced into closer relations with the United States? Did they seek a refuge in political union? No, in the face of that action they conceived and organized the Canadian confederation.

The treaty of 1854 was negotiated by Lord Elgin, when, as I have said, he had as his First Minister Francis Hincks. It was ratified in 1854 by the first Liberal-Conservative administration that we had. That administration was presided over by that staunch, stalwart Tory, Sir Allan Macnab, and one of its members was the young man, John A. Macdonald. Did Sir Allan Macnab, or did John A. Macdonald falter? Did they say to Lord Elgin that they would not advise the ratification of the treaty for fear that, if it were afterwards abolished, the Canadian people would be forced into closer relations with the United States? On the contrary, their advice to Lord Elgin was to ratify the treaty. It never occurred to them that, even if the treaty could be repealed, as it was repealed ten years later, there would be a single Canadian who would be led by the dislocation of trade to seek to change his country's allegiance. But imagine what would have been the colloquy between Lord Elgin and his advisers, if, instead of being advised by such men

as Sir Allan Macnab and John A. Macdonald, he had been advised by the present leaders of the opposition, my hon. friend Mr. Borden and my hon. friend George Eulas Foster. 'Sir,' they would have said, 'do not ratify this treaty.' Lord Elgin would ask them, 'Why; will not the treaty be a cause of satisfaction to the people?' 'It would,' they would answer; 'but that is the very thing we dread. It may bring us prosperity. but, after prosperity comes, the treaty may be repealed and replaced by a high tariff: and we are not sure that our knees would be firm enough and our spines strong enough to resist the aggression of the Americans.

Away with this timorous advice of faint-hearted men, we stand by the example of our stout-hearted men of fifty years ago. Reviewing the situation as it is placed before us, far from sharing the forebodings, the lugubrious forebodings, uttered concerning what is to follow the application, not of a new principle but of an old policy, it seems to me there are evidences not a few that we are now entering upon a new era in our relations with our neighbours, that we can see already whitening on the horizon the dawn of a brighter day. One thing is certain, one thing cannot be denied, that the relations which have existed between the two countries for the last fifty years, especially for the last twenty years, still more for the last twelve years, and which almost came to a crisis a year ago—those relations have been a blot upon the civilization of the two countries. They have amounted practically to a proclamation of noncommercial intercourse between the two countries, so far as legislation could bring this about. Another thing cannot be denied, that the man who raised the Conservative party to the highest pitch of power and influence, the man whose name is still revered, though his example is not followed, Sir John A. Macdonald, deprecated and dreaded that situation. He did all that man could do to change it and improve it. To that end he made many sacrifices and to that end he made his last appeal to the Canadian people.

One other thing cannot be denied, that at this moment, amongst the thoughtful men of the American union, the feeling is growing up that the policy which they have pursued towards us for the last fifty years has been wrong, that it has been injurious to themselves as well as to us, that it is selfish and narrow; and they are prepared to retrace their steps and to enter with us into a mutually profitable commercial intercourse. Now, when we reach that stage, it is inconceivable that we in Canada should be told that this retrograde policy, long followed by the United States and which they are now on the eve of abandoning, should become the Canadian policy, and that we should follow a policy of non-com-

mercial intercourse with them. It is incredible, and yet we have heard that idea proclaimed again and again in this House. We are told that unless this retrograde policy is maintained Canada is exposed to danger, and we are threatened that unless this policy of non-intercourse is maintained we are doomed to annexation. Annexation! Annexation! Once upon a time there was a very strong annexationist movement in this country, and it received its first check when Lord Elgin brought back from Washington the reciprocity treaty of 1856. From that day to this the desire for annexation has dwindled and dwindled, until there is not a vestige of it left in any part of this country.

Once upon a time—this is also a matter of history—the conviction of every American citizen was that the Canadian confederation should become a part of the American union. Recent events have shown that there are still men in the United States who harbour that hope. But there are also men who are beginning to perceive that the republic, though its career has been glorious, has yet many questions to solve and many dangers to face; and many of them are beginning to recognize that the solution of their difficult problems would be seriously complicated, perhaps fatally impaired, if, in the territory of the republic, was to be included another territory as large as their own, with a people not yet as numerous, but destined to be as numerous as their own, with problems of their own also to solve, and whose union with the United States would only add to the complications which the American people have to meet. If my poor voice could be heard throughout the length and breadth of this country, and if, without any presumption, it could be heard also beyond the frontier, I would say to our American neighbours: flattering as may be to your pride, the idea that the territory of the republic should

extend over the whole continent from the waters of the Gulf of Mexico to the waters of the Arctic Ocean, remember that we Canadian were born under the flag of your ancestors, a flag under which perhaps you may have suffered some oppression, but which to us has been, and is more than ever, the emblem of freedom. Remember that if you have founded a nation upon separation from the motherland, we Canadians have set our hearts upon building up a nation without separation; remember that in this task we are already far advanced, that with our institutions, with our national entity as a people, and with everything that constitutes our national home we are just as devoted as you are to yours. Remember that the blood which flows in our veins is just as good as your own, and that if you are a proud people, though we have not your numbers, we are just as proud as you are, and that, rather than part with our national existence, we would part with our lives. If my voice could be heard that far, I would presume to say to our American friends: There may be a spectacle perhaps nobler yet than the spectacle of a united continent, a spectacle which would astound the world by its novelty and grandeur, the spectacle of two peoples living side by side along a frontier nearly 4,000 miles long, with not a cannon, with not a gun frowning across it, with not a fortress on either side, with no armament one against the other, but living in harmony, in mutual confidence, and with no other rivalry than a generous emulation in commerce and the arts of peace. To the Canadian people I would say that if it were possible for us to obtain such relations between this young and growing nation and the powerful American republic, Canada will have rendered to old England, the mother of nations, nay, to the whole British Empire, a service unequalled in its present effect, and still more in its far-reaching consequences.

